



## As China and Iran hunt for dissidents in the U.S., the FBI is racing to counter the threat

Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — After a participant in the historic Tiananmen Square protests entered a 2022 congressional race in New York City, a Chinese intelligence operative wasted little time enlisting a private investigator to hunt for any mistresses or tax problems that could upend the candidate's bid, prosecutors say.

As an Iranian journalist and activist living in exile in the United States aired criticism of Iran's human rights abuses, Tehran was listening too. Members of an Eastern European organized crime gang scouted her Brooklyn home and plotted to kill her in a murder-for-hire scheme directed from Iran, according to the Justice Department, which foiled the plan and brought criminal charges.



Masih Alinejad is interviewed outside Manhattan federal court, April 7, 2023, in New York. American officials say foreign countries like Iran and China intimidate, harass and sometimes plot violence against political opponents and activists in the U.S. "We're not living in fear, we're not living in paranoia, but the reality is very clear — that the Islamic Republic wants us dead, and we have to look over our shoulder every day," the Iranian journalist said.

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# As China and Iran hunt for dissidents in the U.S., the FBI is racing to counter the threat

Continued from Front

The episodes reflect the extreme measures taken by countries like China and Iran to intimidate, harass and sometimes plot attacks against political opponents and activists who live in the U.S. They show the frightening consequences that geopolitical tensions can have for ordinary citizens as governments historically intolerant of dissent inside their own borders are increasingly keeping a threatening watch on those who speak out thousands of miles away.

"We're not living in fear, we're not living in paranoia, but the reality is very clear — that the Islamic Republic wants us dead, and we have to look over our shoulder every day," the Iranian journalist, Masih Alinejad, said in an interview. The issue has grabbed the attention of the Justice Department, which has built cases against dozens of suspects. Senior FBI officials say the tactics have grown more sophisticated, with countries more willing to cross "serious red lines" from harassment into violence as they seek to project power abroad. "This is a huge priority for us," said Assistant Attorney General Matthew Olsen, the Justice Department's top national security official. The trend is all the more worrisome because of an ever-deteriorating relationship with Iran and tensions with China over everything from trade

and theft of intellectual property to election interference. A leading culprit, officials and advocates say, has been China. The Chinese Embassy in Washington disputed that the country engages in the practice and said in a statement that the government "strictly abides by international law." "We resolutely oppose 'long-arm jurisdiction,'" the statement said.

Yet U.S. officials say China created a program to do exactly that, launching "Operation Fox Hunt" to track down Chinese expatriates wanted by Beijing, with a goal of coercing them into returning to face charges.

A former city government official in China living in New Jersey found a note in Chinese characters taped to his front door that said: "If you are willing to go back to the mainland and spend 10 years in prison your wife and children will be all right. That's the end of this matter!" according to a 2020 Justice Department case charging a group of Chinese operatives and an American private investigator.

Though most defendants charged in transnational repression plots are based in their home country, making arrests and prosecutions rare, that particular case led to U.S. convictions of the private investigator and two Chinese citizens.

Bob Fu, a Chinese American Christian pastor whose organization, ChinaAid, advocates

for religious freedom in China, said he has endured far-ranging harassment campaigns for years. Large crowds of demonstrators have amassed for days at a time outside his West Texas home in well-coordinated actions he believes can be linked to the Chinese government.

Phony hotel reservations have been made in his name, along with bogus bomb threats to police stating that he planned to detonate explosives. Flyers depicting him as the devil have been distributed to neighbors. He said he's learned to take precautions when he travels.

"I'm not really feeling safe," Fu told AP.

Wu Jianmin, a former student leader in China's 1989 pro-democracy movement, was targeted in 2020 by a group of protesters outside his home in Irvine, California.

"They shouted slogans outside my home and made verbal abuses," he said. "They paraded in the neighborhood, distributed all sorts of pictures and flyers, and put them in the neighbors' mailboxes."

Last year, the Justice Department charged about three dozen officers in China's national police force with using social media to target dissidents inside the U.S. and arrested two men who it says had helped establish a secret Chinese police outpost in Manhattan's Chinatown neighborhood.

The year before, federal pros-



Wu Jianmin speaks during an interview with the Associated Press, Thursday, April 11, 2024, in Washington.

Associated Press

ecutors disclosed a series of wide-ranging plots to silence dissidents.

Besides the little-known and unsuccessful congressional candidate about whom China wanted to dig up dirt, other victims of harassment in the case included American figure skater Alysa Liu and her father, Arthur, a political refugee who prosecutors say was surveilled by a man who posed as an Olympics committee member and asked them for their passport information.

"We should be under no illusion that somehow these are rogue actors or people that are unaffiliated with the Chinese government," Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi, an Illinois Democrat and member of a special House committee on China, said of the Chinese operatives who have been charged.

Alinejad, the Iranian journalist, was targeted even

before the Justice Department last year revealed the plot against her involving the organized crime proxies. Prosecutors in 2021 charged a group of Iranians said to be working at the behest of the country's intelligence services with planning to kidnap her. She remains active as a journalist and activist and says she's determined to keep speaking out. But the details of the crime are chillingly etched in her mind, with the criminal cases laying bare the gravity of the threat.

The FBI disrupted the plot but also encouraged her to move, which she has done. But that also meant saying goodbye to her garden, which had brought her joy as she gave homegrown cucumbers and other vegetables to neighbors.

"They didn't kill me physically, but they killed my relationship with my garden, with my neighbors," she said. □



A view of the bridge connecting the Russky Island and Vladivostok, in Russia's far east, is seen on Aug. 26, 2023.

Associated Press

By LOLITA C. BALDOR

Associated Press

## An American soldier was arrested in Russia and accused of stealing, U.S. officials say

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — An American soldier has been arrested in Russia and accused of stealing, according to two U.S. officials.

U.S. officials said the soldier, Staff Sgt. Gordon Black, 34, was stationed in South Korea and was in the process of returning home to Fort Cavazos in Texas. Instead, officials said he traveled to Russia.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to dis-

cuss personnel details.

Cynthia Smith, Army spokeswoman, confirmed that a soldier was detained on Thursday in Vladivostok, a major military and commercial Pacific port, on charges of criminal misconduct. She said Russia notified the U.S. and the Army told the soldier's family.

"The U.S. Department of State is providing appropriate consular support to the soldier in Russia," Smith said.

It was unclear Monday if the soldier is considered absent without leave, or AWOL.

The arrest comes less than a year after American soldier Travis King sprinted into North Korea across the heavily fortified border between the Koreas. North Korea later announced that it would expel King, who was returned to the U.S. He was eventually charged with desertion. □

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## Medicare and Social Security go-broke dates are pushed back in a 'measure of good news'

By **FATIMA HUSSEIN and TOM MURPHY**

**Associated Press**

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The go-broke dates for Medicare and Social Security have been pushed back as an improving economy has contributed to changed projected depletion dates, according to the annual Social Security and Medicare trustees report Monday. Still, officials warn that policy changes are needed lest the programs become unable to pay full benefits to retiring Americans.

Medicare's go-broke date for its hospital insurance trust fund was pushed back five years to 2036 in the latest report, thanks in part to higher payroll tax income and lower-than-projected expenses from last year. Medicare is the federal government's health insurance program that covers people age 65 and older and those with se-

vere disabilities or illnesses. It covered more than 66 million people last year, with most being 65 and older.

Once the fund's reserves become depleted, Medicare would be able to cover only 89% of costs for patients' hospital visits, hospice care and nursing home stays or home health care that follow hospital visits.

Meanwhile, Social Security's trust funds — which cover old age and disability recipients — will be unable to pay full benefits beginning in 2035, instead of last year's estimate of 2034. Social Security would only be able to pay 83% of benefits.

Social Security Administration Commissioner Martin O'Malley called the report "a measure of good news," but told The Associated Press that "Congress still needs to act in order to avoid what is now forecast to be, in absence of their action, a 17%

cut to people's Social Security benefits."

About 71 million people — including retirees, disabled people and children — receive Social Security benefits.

Lawmakers have for years kicked Social Security and Medicare's troubling math to the next generation. Social Security benefits were last reformed roughly 40 years ago, when the federal government raised the eligibility age for the program from 65 to 67. The eligibility age has never changed for Medicare, with people eligible for the medical coverage when they turn 65.

Congressional Budget Office report ing has stated that the biggest drivers of debt rising in relation to GDP are increasing interest costs and spending for Medicare and Social Security. An aging population drives those numbers.



**Social Security Administration commissioner Martin O'Malley testifies on Capitol Hill, March 20, 2024, in Washington.**

**Associated Press**

The new report projects that Medicare's income will be higher than last year's because the number of covered workers and average wages will be higher. The report also notes that expenses should drop. That's due mostly to a policy change regarding how Medicare Advantage rates are accounted for and lower-than-expected spending for inpatient hospital and home health agency services.

Medicare Advantage plans are a version of the federal program run by health insurers.

A March 2023 poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research shows that most U.S. adults are opposed to proposals that would cut into Medicare or Social Security benefits, and a majority support raising taxes on the nation's highest earners to keep Medicare running as is. □



**Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., speaks during a news conference, Jan. 25, 2024, at the Capitol in Washington. Sanders is running for re-election.**

**Associated Press**

By **LISA RATHKE**  
**Associated Press**

Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont announced Monday he will run for reelection this year, squelching speculation that the 82-year-old progressive icon might retire at a time when the Democratic Party is anxious about the advancing

age of its top leaders.

Hailing from a Democratic stronghold, Sanders' decision virtually guarantees that he will return to Washington for a fourth Senate term. And his announcement comes at a critical moment for Democrats as the party navigates a growing divide over Israel's

## Liberal icon Bernie Sanders is running for Senate reelection, squelching retirement rumors

war against Hamas in Gaza. Sanders has criticized President Joe Biden's handling of the U.S. relationship with Israel even as he's hailed much of Biden's domestic agenda ahead of what could be a tough reelection fight for Biden against GOP presidential nominee Donald Trump.

Sanders said he wants the war in Gaza ended immediately, massive humanitarian aid to follow and no more money sent to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"We are living in a complicated and difficult political moment," Sanders told The Associated Press on Monday. "I very strongly disagree with Biden in terms of the war in Gaza."

At home, he said, the presi-

dential election is between Biden and Trump, "and Donald Trump is in my view the most dangerous president, has been the most dangerous president in American history." With the prospect of Trump's possible return to the White House, Sanders framed his bid to return to the Senate as being driven by concerns about the future of democracy in the U.S. In an announcement video, he said that in many ways the 2024 election "is the most consequential election in our lifetimes."

"Will the United States continue to even function as a democracy, or will we move to an authoritarian form of government?" he said. He questioned whether the country will reverse what he

called "the unprecedented level of income and wealth inequality" and if it can create a government that works for all, and not continue with a political system dominated by wealthy campaign contributors. Known for his liberal politics and crusty demeanor, Sanders has been famously consistent over his 40 years in politics, championing better health care paid for by the government, higher taxes for the wealthy, less military intervention and major solutions for climate change. He has also spent his career trying to hold corporate executives to account, something that he's had more power to do as chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. □

# Millions of people across Oklahoma, southern Kansas at risk of tornadoes and severe thunderstorms

By **ALEXA ST. JOHN, SEAN MURPHY and JIM SALTER**  
**Associated Press**

Millions of people in the central United States must brace themselves for powerful storms that may include long-track tornadoes, hurricane-force winds and baseball-sized hail, forecasters said Monday, issuing a rare high risk warning for central Oklahoma and southern Kansas.

Much of Oklahoma and parts of Kansas are at the greatest risk of bad weather — including areas in Oklahoma, such as Sulphur and Holdenville, still recovering from a tornado that killed four and left thousands without power late last month. Both the Plains and Midwest have been hammered by tornadoes this spring.

The National Weather Service said that more than 3.4 million people, 1,614 schools and 159 hospitals in Oklahoma, portions of southern Kansas and far north Texas, face the most severe threat for tornadoes.

In all, nearly 10 million people live in areas that could be affected, the National Weather Service's Storm Prediction Center said.

Schools and colleges across the state, including the University of Oklahoma, Oklahoma City Public Schools and several metro-area school districts, shut down early and canceled late afternoon and evening classes



**A mailbox is partially submerged on a flooded street in an unincorporated area in east Harris County near Houston on Sunday morning, May 5, 2024.**

and activities. Oklahoma's State Emergency Operations Center, which coordinates storm response from a bunker near the state Capitol, remains activated from last weekend's deadly storms, and the state's commissioner of public safety told state agencies to let most of their workers across Oklahoma leave early on Monday. Monte Tucker, a farmer and rancher in the far western Oklahoma town of Sweetwater, spent Monday putting some of his tractors and heavy equipment in barns to protect it from potential hail and letting his neighbors know they can come

to his house if the weather becomes dangerous.

"We built a house 10 years ago, and my stubborn wife put her foot down and made sure we built a safe room," Tucker said. He said the entire ground-level room is built with reinforced concrete walls.

Tucker said there's not much you can do to protect cattle from severe storms, but he said the animals tend to know when the weather turns threatening.

Bill Bunting, deputy director of the Storm Prediction Center, said a high risk from the center is not something seen every day or every spring.

"It's the highest level of threat we can assign. And it's a day to take very, very seriously," he said.

The last time a high risk was issued was March 31, 2023, when a massive storm system tore through parts of the South and Midwest including Arkansas, Illinois and rural Indiana.

The risk on Monday in parts of the southern Plains is the worst in five years, AccuWeather Chief Meteorologist Jon Porter said.

"If you look at a meteorology textbook about how to get a significant tornado outbreak in the southern Plains, all the ingredients you need are

here today," Porter said.

Cities that could see stormy weather include Kansas City, Missouri, and Lincoln, Nebraska.

The number of storms and their intensity should increase quickly in the evening hours across western parts of Oklahoma and up into south-central Kansas, Bunting said. The expected thunderstorms could produce winds up to and potentially exceeding 80 mph (49.71 kph), according to Porter. Even worse, those "supercell" storms can produce destructive tornadoes. "The kinds of tornadoes that this storm can produce are particularly intense, and they can be long-lasting," Porter said. "These are the tornadoes that sometimes can last for 45 minutes or an hour, even more, creating paths of destruction as they move along."

The high risk is due to an unusual confluence: Winds gusting up to around 75 mph (46.60 kph) have been blasting through Colorado's populated Front Range region, including the Denver area, on Monday.

The winds are being created by a low pressure system north of Colorado that is also pulling up moisture from the Gulf of Mexico, fueling the risk of severe weather on the Plains, said Greg Heavener, warning coordination meteorologist at the National Weather Service's Denver-area office. □



**In this photo provided by Mammoth Mountain Ski Area, snow falls in Mammoth Lakes, Calif., Saturday, May 4, 2024.**

**Associated Press**

**TRUCKEE, Calif. (AP)** — A weekend spring storm that drenched the San Fran-

cisco Bay area and closed Northern California mountain highways also set a

## Sierra Nevada records snowiest day of the season from brief but potent California storm

single-day snowfall record for the season on Sunday in the Sierra Nevada.

The wet weather system had mostly moved out of the state by Sunday morning, but officials warned that roads would remain slick after around two feet (60 centimeters) of snow fell in some areas of the Sierra.

"Did anyone have the snowiest day of the 2023/2024 season being in May on their winter bingo card?" the University of

California, Berkeley Central Sierra Snow Lab asked on the social platform X.

The 26.4 inches (67 centimeters) of snowfall on Sunday beat the second snowiest day of the season — March 3rd — by 2.6 inches (6.6 centimeters), according to the lab.

Treacherous driving conditions on Saturday forced the closure of several highways near Lake Tahoe, including Interstate 80 over the Donner Summit.

Flood advisories were is-

sued for parts of the Bay Area, where up to an inch (2.5 centimeters) of rain fell while temperatures dipped into the low 40s (around 5 degrees Celsius), the National Weather Service said. Wind gusts reaching 40 mph (64 kph) were reported Saturday near San Francisco.

The storm brought light rain and gusty winds to Southern California.

Drier and warmer conditions were expected throughout the week. □

# John Swinney expected to lead Scotland after taking the helm of the Scottish National Party

By BRIAN MELLEY  
Associated Press

**LONDON (AP)** — Scotland's former deputy first minister was poised to become its third leader in just over a year after taking the helm of the troubled Scottish National Party on Monday.

John Swinney, who led the SNP two decades ago, was the only candidate to replace First Minister Humza Yousaf as the leader of the party.

The SNP has been in turmoil since long-serving First Minister Nicola Sturgeon abruptly stepped down last year during a campaign finance investigation that eventually led to criminal charges against her husband.

Swinney, 60, who joined the party at age 15, will try to bring stability to the SNP as it fights efforts by opponents to weaken it going into U.K.-wide parliamentary elections expected later this year.

"The polarization of politics does not serve our country well," Swinney said as he was named party leader. "I will reach out to everyone willing to join with us in good faith and seek compromises that serve our nation well. We need to stop shouting at each other and talk. More than that, actually, we need to listen. As first minister, I will do exactly that." Yousaf announced his resignation last week after a political miscalculation in which he booted the Green Party from the ruling coalition of Scotland's semi-autonomous government. The SNP is one seat short of a majority in the local parliament with 63 of the 128 voting seats, so it needs to partner with at least one opposition party. The pro-independence SNP was weakened by the campaign finance scandal and divisions over transgender rights, but was ultimately brought down by Yousaf's decision to oust the Greens because of differences over climate change goals. Yousaf was unable to persuade other



Newly elected leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP) John Swinney delivers his acceptance speech at the Advanced Research Centre (ARC) of the Glasgow University, in Glasgow, Monday, May 6, 2024, after he was confirmed as the SNP's new leader.

Associated Press

parties to back his minority government in Scotland's parliament. Facing the prospect of two no-confidence votes that had been scheduled, Yousaf quit rather than be forced out. Yousaf will remain first minister until his replacement is elected. Swinney is likely to be elected to that position later this week. Swinney thanked Yousaf for serving with "grace and dignity," and said that his "moral leadership on the issue of Gaza has been a light in very dark times." Yousaf won a bruising campaign to take over the party after Sturgeon, who was first minister for eight years, resigned unexpectedly in February 2023. About a month later, Sturgeon's husband, Peter Murrell, who was the party's chief executive, was arrested as police investigated how 600,000 pounds (\$750,000) earmarked for a Scottish independence campaign was spent. Sturgeon and Colin Beattie, the party's former treasurer, were later arrested and questioned in the inquiry, but they were released without being charged with a crime. Murrell was charged last month with

embezzlement. Swinney had served as Sturgeon's deputy first minister during her tenure as Scotland's leader, but stepped down when she left office. Conservative leader Douglas Ross said that Swinney's past makes him unlikely to bring the change that Scotland needs. "John Swinney was joined at the hip with the disgraced Nicola Sturgeon and his fingerprints are all over her numerous policy failures and cover-ups," Ross said. Swinney pledged to lead a center-left government focused on the economy, jobs, the cost of living, the National Health Service, schools, public services and the "climate crisis." Swinney said that he would make his case to persuade people of the need for Scottish independence, which voters rejected in 2014. He cited Brexit and the cost-of-living crisis, which he blamed on U.K. politicians in London, as being bad for Scotland. "They demonstrate why Scotland needs to have independence to make our own decisions and create our best future," he said. "If someone is an independence supporter in Scotland and they want Scotland to be independent, there's only one political party that will ever deliver and that's the Scottish National Party." □

ty after Sturgeon, who was first minister for eight years, resigned unexpectedly in February 2023. About a month later, Sturgeon's husband, Peter Murrell, who was the party's chief executive, was arrested as police investigated how 600,000 pounds (\$750,000) earmarked for a Scottish independence campaign was spent. Sturgeon and Colin Beattie, the party's former treasurer, were later arrested and questioned in the inquiry, but they were released without being charged with a crime. Murrell was charged last month with



This undated photo made available by the Foundation for Investigative Journalism shows Daniel Ojukwu in Lagos, Nigeria.

Associated Press

## Nigerian journalist's arrest last week triggers criticism of worsening press freedoms

By CHINEDU ASADU  
Associated Press

**ABUJA, Nigeria (AP)** — A Nigerian journalist's arrest last week has triggered criticism of worsening press freedoms in the West African country. Daniel Ojukwu with the Foundation for Investigative Journalism went missing last Wednesday in the economic hub of Lagos. His family and employer found out on Friday that he was detained and held in a police station for

allegedly violating the country's Cybercrime Act, often criticized as a tool for censorship. The arrest of Ojukwu, who was later transferred to the Nigerian capital of Abuja, follows his report about alleged financial mismanagement of over 147 million naira (\$104,600) involving a senior government official, according to his employer, the foundation. Nigeria is ranked 112th out of 180 countries in the latest World Press Freedom

Index by Reporters Without Borders. It is known for the country's tough environment for journalists who face frequent abductions, arrests and prosecution, usually after reporting on chronic corruption and bad governance plaguing the oil-rich country. At least 25 journalists have been prosecuted under the country's Cybercrime Act since it was introduced in 2015, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists.

They include eight detained under President Bola Tinubu whose government, in power since May last year, touts itself as one encouraging press freedoms — a claim it repeated last week during World Press Freedom Day events. The Cybercrime Act was amended this year to remove some harsh provisions but the police still use it to "silence journalists and critics," Amnesty International's Nigeria office said. □

## Panama's new president-elect, José Raúl Mulino, was a late entry in the race

By **JUAN ZAMORANO**

**Associated Press**

**PANAMA CITY (AP)** — José Raúl Mulino said he was practically retired from politics just over six months ago. Now, he'll be Panama's president for the next five years.

Standing before a pack of supporters Sunday night, Mulino said: "I never imagined this."

In a historic and tumultuous election, preliminary results put Mulino on top to lead the normally sleepy Central American nation through a moment of political tension, historic migration and a struggling economy.

The 64-year-old lawyer, whose last position in politics was as minister of security in then President Ricardo Martinelli's 2009-2014 administration, was initially tapped by the popular former leader to be his running mate after Martinelli's wife declined. But then Martinelli was disqualified from running after he was sentenced to more than 10 years in prison for a money laundering conviction. Mulino took his place, and ended up winning Sunday's presidential election with nearly 35% of the vote and a nine-point lead over his nearest opponent af-



**Presidential candidate Jose Raul Mulino, of the Achieving Goals party, speaks to supporters after winning on the day of the general electing in Panama City, Sunday, May 5, 2024.**

**Associated Press**

ter dodging constitutional challenges to his own candidacy.

The president-elect got there with strong support from Martinelli, arguably the most important tool in Mulino's campaign as he rode the fiery ex-leader's popularity to victory.

While he lacks Martinelli's charisma, the economic boom seen under his ally pushed many voters to support Mulino at a time that

Panama's economy has lagged.

The former president, who has been sheltering in the Nicaraguan Embassy since February after receiving political asylum, said his trust for Mulino dates back 30 years.

"Mulino seems a little tough, but he is a good guy, serious, and is the only one prepared to take on this great challenge and knows how the economy works to lift

the country," Martinelli said in a video broadcast to supporters at Mulino's campaign close.

A maritime law attorney who graduated from Tulane University in New Orleans, Mulino became known as a private business leader who took part in a civil movement against the dictatorship of Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega, who was ousted by an American invasion on Dec. 20, 1989.

He acted as vice minister of foreign affairs in the 1989-1994 administration of President Guillermo Endara, who took office after the fall of Noriega and the end of the Panamanian military regime. Mulino later remained in charge of the country's international policy in the last part of that administration. Mulino remained active in politics and more than a decade later backed Martinelli in the election that the supermarket magnate won in 2009. Mulino was appointed minister of the interior and justice, later taking the reins of the public security office.

Mulino says one of the achievements during that time was to "recover" a swath of Panama on the border with Colombia, known as the Darien Gap, which "was in the hands of the narco-guerrillas" of the neighboring country.

As president, he has promised to stop soaring levels of migration through the Darien jungles, where more than a half million people crossed last year, though experts question the viability of his plan due to the sheer quantities of vulnerable people traveling through the passage. □

## Turkey formally opens another former Byzantine-era church as a mosque



**People visit a former Byzantine church which formally opened as a mosque, in Istanbul, Turkey, Monday, May 6, 2024.**

**Associated Press**

**ANKARA, Turkey (AP)** — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan formally opened a former Byzantine church in Istanbul as a mosque on Monday, four

years after his government had designated it a Muslim house of prayer, despite criticism from neighboring Greece.

Turkey formally converted

The Church of St. Saviour in Chora, known as Kariye in Turkish, into a mosque in 2020, soon after it similarly turned Istanbul's landmark Hagia Sophia into a Muslim house of prayer.

Both conversions drew praise from Muslim faithful but criticism from Greece and other countries who had urged Turkey to protect the important Byzantine-era monuments. Both are listed as U.N. World Heritage Sites.

Like Hagia Sophia, which was a church for centuries and then a mosque for centuries more, the Chora had operated as a museum for decades before it was ordered turned into a mosque. The Chora's formal launch as a mosque,

however, was delayed as the structure then underwent restoration.

Erdogan on Monday remotely presided over a ceremony marking the opening of the Chora — as well as other recently-restored structures — from a conference hall at his palace complex in Ankara.

"May it bring good fortune," Erdogan said during the televised event.

Musa Tombul was among the first worshippers to pray inside.

"I have been waiting for its opening for four years," he told the state-run Anadolu Agency. "I was honored to pray in such a place."

"We thank God for showing us these days," Anadolu quoted another wor-

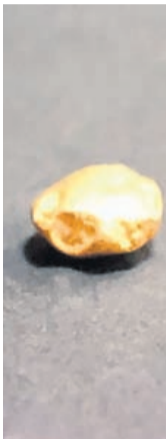
shiper, Haydar Senbahar, as saying. "Hopefully, we will come here from time to time and perform our prayers."

The church, situated near Istanbul's ancient city walls, is famed for its elaborate mosaics and frescoes. It dates to the fourth century, although the edifice took on its current form in the 11th-12th centuries.

The structure served as a mosque during Ottoman rule before being transformed into a museum in 1945.

Greece had criticized the Turkish government's decision to turn it back into a mosque, accusing Ankara of "insulting the character" of another World Heritage Site. □

## In celebration of 200 years of the Aruban gold rush: Get to know the history of the gold industry on Aruba



**(Oranjestad)—This year we celebrate a few milestone anniversaries on Aruba, one of them being the 200th anniversary of when gold was first discovered on the island. We have talked about the Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruin before and its brief history during the gold industry on Aruba, but get to know a little more about the history of the “Aruban Gold Rush.”**

The first hint of gold on Aruba actually dates back to 1725, when rumors about gold being found in dug up treasure chests of the Spanish colonial era prompted the first official exploration for gold on the island, commissioned by the Dutch West India Company. Under the leadership of Mr. Paulus Printz, a three-year search was conducted on Aruba, to no avail. Though they found some specks of gold, it was not enough to motivate a further search, and the assignment was discontinued by Printz himself. It wasn't until 100 years later, in 1824, when a young farmer boy named Willem Rasmijn found a lump of gold while out herding his father's sheep in the area of Rooi Fluit on the north coast. His father took it to a local merchant who then sold the lump for \$70. Unbeknownst to the boy and his father, they quite literally struck gold, and as word got out, a gold fever spread among the locals who started searching for more gold.

When the colonial governor in Curacao, Governor Cantz'laar, heard about the news, he sent his adjutant, Capitan van Raders, to start harvesting gold. This was in July 1824. In August of that same year, the governor followed suit to the island, accompanied by high-ranking military officials. When citizens started swarming the area in search for gold, The Netherlands sent more troops to safe guard the gold.

Prominent places where gold was found was in Daimari, Wacobana, Arikok, Rooi Fluit, Hadicouradi and later West punt, where gold ore was found. Because of a lack in advanced technology and materials to harvest the gold, the process took a more primitive approach: Clay rocks containing traces of gold were left to dry in the sun. Then, workers would start chipping the clay away on a large canvas to catch the gold particles that were left behind after the wind blew away the dust from the clay.

In the harvest period of 1824-1825, there was a total of 71,000 kilos collected through commissioned harvesting. Locals themselves reportedly found about 25 pounds worth of gold in the nearby rivers. The following years after that first big harvest, commission work fell off, and in 1828, the director of the goldmines, Johan Gravenhorst, decided to halt harvesting.

Almost 40 years later, the London-based Aruba Island Gold Mining Company Ltd. was granted concession. The firm built their gold mines on Bushiribana, and in the port of Oranjestad a long road that connected the gold mill to the port. The ores themselves came from Sero Plat en Sero Cristal.

By this point, workers were still using primitive methods to harvest the ores. For example, when someone had to go into the mines, there were no stairs or lifts; the person had to be brought down in a big bucket, with two or more workers holding the bucket by a thick rope above ground. Aruba Island Gold Mining Company Ltd. reportedly operated until 1899, and right after the Aruba Gold Concession Ltd. was established, coincidentally also based in London. This time, the gold mill in Balashi was built, and more mines were dug up all around the island. The gold ores that were found were transported via track engine, locally called the “trekinchi”. Despite being more equipped for the job, the Aruba Gold Concession Ltd. could not produce any real profit, and so the concession was terminated just eight years later, in 1908.

A local firm, the “Aruba Goud Maatschappij” (Aruba Gold Company) took over the concession, along with all the materials and equipment. In the beginning, the company saw good profit, and for a while, the island's economy depended primarily on the mining and harvesting of gold. But just like its predecessors, the streak of luck for the Aruba Gold Company came to an end when WWI broke out.

The main reason why production stopped this time was reportedly because of a lack in dynamite for extracting the ores from the mines, as well as a lack in raw materials like German cyanide for the refining process. By the time the war ended, the equipment that was left at Balashi were too old to use again. After the war, gold production on the Aruba was left to a standstill.

According to an issue in Aruba Esso News paper in 1953, Henny Eman wanted to start up digging again, this time using independent miners. He argued that there was proof of more gold to be discovered. Plus, hiring independent miners would boost the island's employment rate.

When it was proven that gold was in fact still present, the executive board on the island promised to fund the project only if the gold dug up proved to be valuable. However, nothing else was reported after this, so it could be concluded that there was no real profitable market on the island anymore.

The ruins of the Bushiribana and Balashi Gold Mills are still standing, and open for the public to visit. These structures offer a glance into the past, to a time where Aruba experienced one of its first wave of industrialization. Today, these structures are persevered as historical monuments. □

Source:

1. “De Kolibrie op de Rots (en meer over the geschiedenis van Aruba)” by Evert Bongers.
2. Aruba Esso News, 1953 issue.



## The Radisson Blu Aruba Wins Prestigious “Best of Choice” 2024 Award

The Radisson Blu Aruba is thrilled to announce that it has been awarded with a prestigious 2024 “Best of Choice” Award by Choice Hotels International, Inc. (NYSE: CHH), one of the world’s leading lodging franchisors. This esteemed recognition highlights the exceptional dedication to guest satisfaction and superior service that the hotel has consistently demonstrated since its opening three years ago.

Among more than 6,500 hotel owners and executives, General Manager of the resort, Luigi Wix and Commercial Director, Shareska Gutierrez, jetted off to Las Vegas to receive the award, where they enjoyed an unforgettable ceremony. The “Best of Choice” Award is the highest form of award within Choice Hotels, granted to the top hotels within the company’s domestic and international portfolio, representing a tremendous accomplishment. As one of the top-tier properties operating under the Radisson Blu flag, the hotel has demonstrated an exceptional focus on guest satisfaction and dedication to superior service. Award criteria are evaluated by Choice Hotels through its official property ranking reports.

Since opening its doors three years ago, Radisson Blu Aruba has quickly become a beloved destination for travelers seeking modern luxury, relaxation, and authentic service. Led by a dedicated all-local leadership team, the resort has earned a reputation for delivering unforgettable experiences that showcase the beauty and charm of Aruba. From its stunning accommodations and amenities to its breathtaking surroundings and commitment to sustainability, guests are treated to a tranquil and rejuvenating stay in Palm Beach.

Luigi Wix, General Manager of the Radisson Blu Aru-



ba, expressed his gratitude for the award, saying, “We are truly honored to receive the 2024 ‘Best of Choice’ Award, especially as we celebrate our third anniversary. This recognition is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our entire team, who consistently strive to provide our guests with unforgettable experiences at our One Happy Island.” As Radisson Blu Aruba continues to write its story of success, this international accolade serves as a testament to its dedication to providing exceptional experiences that leave a lasting impression on every guest.

The Radisson Blu Aruba is proud to be part of Choice Privileges, the award-winning rewards program where members earn points on eligible charges during their stay, which can be redeemed for reward nights at nearly 7,500 hotels across 22 brands located in 47 countries and territories worldwide. With the Choice Privileges Mastercard and Choice Privileges Select Mastercard, members can earn more points faster, including on everyday purchases.

For more information or to make a reservation at this award-winning hotel, visit [www.bluaruba.com](http://www.bluaruba.com) or <https://www.choicehotels.com/aruba/oranjestad/hotels>.

### About Radisson Blu Aruba

Located in Palm Beach, Radisson Blu Aruba embodies the essence of Caribbean luxury with a boutique hotel feel. With its prime location overlooking the Caribbean Sea, the 156-room hotel offers guests an unparalleled tropical experience. The resort offers one-, two- and three-bedroom suites with separate living areas, world-class dining options and a host of upscale amenities including an on-site spa, fully equipped gym and two pristine pools. As the only LEED Certified resort in Aruba, Radisson Blu Aruba’s accommodations prioritize the environment, featuring energy-efficient lighting, low-flow water fixtures and eco-friendly amenities. For more information, visit [bluaruba.com](http://bluaruba.com).

### About Choice Hotels®

Choice Hotels International, Inc. (NYSE: CHH) is one of the largest lodging franchisors in the world. The challenger in upscale and a leader in midscale and extended stay, Choice® has over 7,500 hotels, representing more than 630,000 rooms, in 46 countries and territories. A diverse portfolio of 22 brands that range from full-service upper upscale properties to mid-scale, extended stay and economy enables Choice® to meet travelers’ needs in more places and for more occasions while driving more value for franchise owners and shareholders. The award-winning Choice Privileges® rewards program and co-brand credit card options provide members with a fast and easy way to earn reward nights and personalized perks. For more information, visit [www.choicehotels.com](http://www.choicehotels.com).



## THE RADISSON BLU ARUBA WINS PRESTIGIOUS “BEST OF CHOICE” 2024 AWARD

This esteemed recognition highlights the exceptional dedication to guest satisfaction and superior service that the hotel has consistently demonstrated since its opening three years ago.

Radisson BLU  
ARUBA



Best of Choice  
2024

## Food culture in Aruba

**(Oranjestad) - Like many other cultures, an important aspect of the Aruban cultural identity is our connection to food and food traditions. The local food traditions consist of a melting pot of different cultural and religious eating habits and dishes.**

### Breakfast, lunch and dinner

The routine of breakfast, lunch and dinner on the island is one that does not completely follow a European or American routine, despite the major influences from these parts of the world on our culture and way of living. When it comes to the three important meals of the day, most of the Aruban population follows a Latin-American influenced routine.

### Breakfast

Breakfast in Aruba is quite simple: a cup of coffee or tea, some bread, and sometimes an egg. Sometimes, due to the need of a quick "to-go" breakfast, you may also find many snack trucks and cafes that sell sandwiches, pastechis (meat pie), arepas and empanadas early in the morning.

### Main Meal

The main meal is typically eaten in

most households around noon or in the afternoon. This can consist of meat, fish, and chicken—stewed or fried—with funchi (polenta) or rice with stewed vegetables. Often, fried or boiled plantain or pan bati (Aruban pancake) is included. Stews are a staple in Aruban cuisine and can be largely influenced by Latin-American and Latin/Afro-Caribbean Stews. Some of the more unique stews and soups from the ABC Islands\* include sopi di bonchi cora (red kidney bean soup with pig tail), sopi mondongo (tripe soup), carni stoba (beef stew), comcomber stoba (West Indian gherkin stew) and much more.

### Dinner Time

Dinner time can vary significantly from household to household. Unlike the U.S. or in Europe, dinner time typically does not consist of a whole (warm) meal. Instead, the evening "meal" can typically consist of something lighter, like a sandwich, though it is not uncommon to see leftovers from the main meal reheated and eaten again. Tea and coffee are often also served with the evening snack.

### (Religious) Holidays



Christmas is probably the biggest global holiday, and every culture has its own spin on what their Christmas cuisine entails. In Aruba, our Christmas cuisine is again largely based on Latin-American influences, most notably from Venezuela. Ayacas and the famous pan di ham\* are two crucial holiday dishes, along with stuffed turkey, roasted glazed ham topped with pineapples, arroz con pollo (rice and chicken) and potato salad, among other items. Traditional drinks include ponche crema (Aruban eggnog), chuculati pinda (hot chocolate with peanut butter), and homemade fruit punch. Desserts include, bolo di pistachio (pistachio cake), bolo di cashupete (cashew cake), quesillo (flan), bolo preto (dark fruit cake), drigidek (gingerbread), pan boyo (bread cake) and more.

### Snacks and tasty delights

Besides meals and dishes that are eaten on the dinner table, Aruba also has a food tradition that includes snacks and other tasty delights that you may easily find around the island. These include, Saco\*, basket, pastechi, kroket, deditos, Johnny cake and more. These snacks are usually sold at local snack trucks and cafes, often

located on the side of the road. In the area of Tanki Leendert and Tanki flip, for example, there are many of these trucks parked on the side of the road and often open until late at night—offering tasty and filling snacks post night-life fun.□

**\*ABC Islands: Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao**

**\*Pan di ham: Derived from the Venezuelan Pan de Jamon (rolled up bread with ham, raisins and olives)**

**\*Saco: Saco literally means "bag". Saco contains fried potatoes, plantains, chicken (and ribs) and a Johnny cake, served in a paper bag.**

**Source: Voeding, voedingsgewoonten en gerechten op Aruba (Nutrition, Food Traditions and Dishes on Aruba) by Biblioteca Nacional Aruba**



## Aruba to me

**ORANJESTAD — You are back or still enjoying your vacation?... we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.**

Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is ..... Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting

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# Aruba's underwater wonderland



**ORANJESTAD** - Exploring the underwater wonders is something you should definitely do during your stay in Aruba. The underwater world has everything to offer that makes a snorkel trip so exceptional; an impressive, colorful sea life with exotic fishes, turtles and beautiful coral reef. The historic shipwrecks, located on the Aruban seabed are also worth a visit. Aruba is known for its white beaches and blue oceans, which means there are many fascinating under water spots, where you can take your snorkeling gear and we selected the top spots for you.

## Tres Trapi

Tres Trapi means tree steps in Papiamentu, Papiamentu is together with Dutch the official language spoken on Aruba. The beach is called Tres Trapi because it is accessible by the tree steps carved into the rocks. Tres Trapi is a small rocky beach, located on the north-western side of the island, approximately 5 to 10 minute drive from Palm Beach. From the unique steps you can easily walk over the beach into the clear and turquoise blue ocean. While snorkeling you will encounter all kind of tropical fishes and sea stars. The kind of starfish you will find in the Aruban waters is the red cushion sea star. This is a starfish that is commonly found in the shallow waters of the Caribbean sea and if you are lucky during your snorkeling visit to Tres Trapi, you may come across one of the green sea turtles. Respect the animal, keep your distance and enjoy the view. Also remember; it is a once in a life time experience.

## Antilla shipwreck

Antilla is a 400-foot-long long ship, built in 1939 in Hamburg, Germany. Antilla came to Aruba, because it had to find a neutral port. When Germany invaded the Netherlands on May 10, 1940, the crew decided to let their own ship sink, to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Dutch Navy. Antilla lies on its portside in Malmok bay, and the sunken world war two ship is now one of Aruba's most popular snorkeling

and dive spots. However, the ship wreck can only be reached by boat. The ship is visible from the surface and during your snorkeling trip you be surrounded by hundreds of tropical fishes, but the ship wreck alone is already impressive enough.

## Baby Beach

Baby beach; a white beach, with a crystal blue ocean. The beach is located on the southern part of the island. On the way to the famous beach, you will drive through the old capital of Aruba, San Nicolas. The old Aruban culture can be still felt and experienced here, so do not hesitate to get out of your car and walk around for a while. Baby beach is a child friendly beach, since it is shallow and the water has a pleasant temperature. The name therefore fits well with the beach. Baby beach is an excellent beach for snorkeling, especially if you want to go with small children, because the water remains shallow and there are still many underwater wonders to see. In the ocean there is an area marked until where it is recommended to snorkel and on the beach you will find different facilities. It is a perfect beach to spend your day snorkeling and relaxing.

## Mangel Halto

Mangel Halto beach is located in Savaneta, on the southern-west part of the island. The beach is different from the other beaches in Aruba; it is beach full of mangroves. You reach the beach by a bridge through the mangroves and then you will have several entrances to the sea. There are diverse spots where you can enjoy a perfect beach day, wooden stairs made to enter the water and a dock to sit on and enjoy the view. Mangel Halto is also worth a visit for the snorkeling experience. Inside the bay, the water is clear and you find many colorful fish. Outside the bay is a bit more challenging for beginners because of the wind and the waves, but the coral is alive and it is just like snorkel heaven. □



# CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

## ACROSS

- 1 Stopped moving
- 6 Varnish ingredient
- 11 Column style
- 12 Yucca's kin
- 13 Nitrous oxide
- 15 Harris and Asner
- 16 Archaic
- 17 Colony member
- 18 Under
- 20 Team
- 23 Like some drinks
- 27 For us
- 28 Band sample
- 29 Skeleton makeup
- 31 Track great Owens
- 32 Stylist's spot
- 34 Mournful
- 37 Debt reminder
- 38 Chore
- 41 Real pity
- 44 Wide awake
- 45 Game piece
- 46 Methods
- 47 Wasn't thrifty

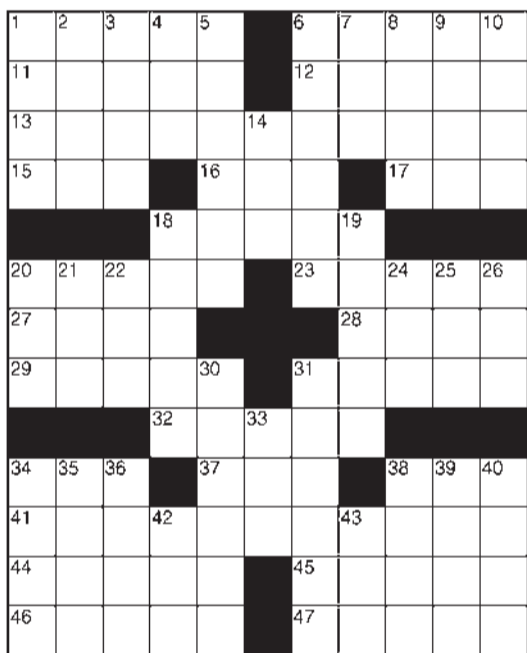
## DOWN

- 1 Do clerical work
- 2 Driving site
- 3 Burden
- 4 Make a sharp turn
- 5 Reverberated
- 6 Unpredictable
- 7 Easter find
- 8 Long story
- 9 Infamous czar
- 10 High home
- 14 Suffering
- 18 Diamond corners
- 19 Make broader
- 20 Cry loudly



Yesterday's answer

- 21 Status —
- 22 Coffee dispenser
- 24 Crosses out
- 25 Print units
- 26 Female rabbit
- 30 New Orleans team
- 31 Knights' fights
- 33 Lumber unit
- 34 Con
- 35 Singer Guthrie
- 36 Not natural, in a way
- 38 Boxer La Motta
- 39 Sign
- 40 Flexed
- 42 Hot blood
- 43 Bunny move



5-7

AXYDLBAAXR  
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

5-7

## CRYPTOQUOTE

RI PIMD FB RI QFAD EITJBDGN  
RI RPD NTRTJD — UXC RPUR  
SIYYFRYDXR RI RPD NTRTJD FB  
VPUR YUODB RPD MJDBDXR  
FXPUHFRUHGD. — JDHDSSU  
BIGXFR

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: MAY, MORE THAN ANY OTHER MONTH OF THE YEAR, WANTS US TO FEEL MOST ALIVE. — FENNEL HUDSON

## Cruise ship Schedule: May 01 - May 28 2024

TUE	07	CARNIVAL MAGIC	09.00	22.00	C	1
TUE	14	ADVENTURE OF THE SEAS	08.00	21.00	B	1
		CARNIVAL HORIZON	08.00	22.00	C	1
WED	15	RHAPSODY OF THE SEAS	09.00	21.00	C	1
TUE	21	CELEBRITY BEYOND	08.00	21.00	B	1
		CARNIVAL VISTA	13.00	23.00	C	1
WED	22	CARNIVAL CELEBRATION	08.00	22.00	C	1
MON	27	ISLAND PRINCESS	09.00	22.00	C	1
TUE	28	CARNIVAL HORIZON	09.00	22.00	C	1

## Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic—but important—information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

lets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.

### Supermarket hours



Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

### Electrical power



Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of out-

### Drinking water



The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.

### Safety



Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

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## Former Starbucks CEO Schultz says company needs to refocus on coffee as sales struggle



**Starbucks founder and former CEO Howard Schultz testifies before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee at the Capitol in Washington, Wednesday, March 29, 2023.**

Associated Press

**By DEE-ANN DURBIN  
AP Business Writer**

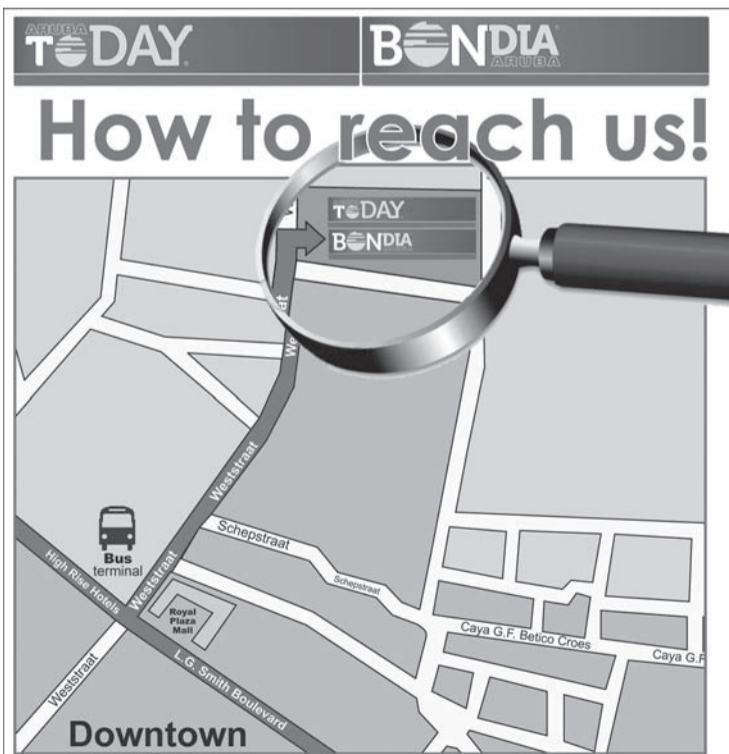
Former Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz says the company's leaders should spend more time in stores and focus on coffee drinks as they work to turn around flagging sales. In a LinkedIn post published over the weekend, Schultz said many people had reached out to him after Starbucks reported weaker-than-expected quarterly sales and earnings last week.

The Seattle coffee giant said revenue dropped 2% in the January-March period as store traffic slowed around the world. It was the first time since 2020 that the company saw a drop in quarterly revenue. Starbucks also lowered

its sales and earnings guidance for its full fiscal year. Schultz, who bought Starbucks in 1987, is credited with growing the company into the global behemoth it has become with nearly 39,000 stores worldwide. He has been the chairman emeritus of the company since last fall, when he stepped down from Starbucks' board. Schultz remains Starbucks' largest individual shareholder, holding shares that were valued at \$1.5 billion at the end of last year.

In his post, Schultz said senior leaders – including board members – need to spend more time talking to baristas in the company's stores.

"I have emphasized that the company's fix needs to begin at home: U.S. operations are the primary reason for the company's fall from grace," he said. □

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# With help from AI, Randy Travis got his voice back. Here's how his first song post-stroke came to be

By **MARIA SHERMAN**  
AP Music Writer

With some help from artificial intelligence, country music star Randy Travis, celebrated for his timeless hits like "Forever and Ever, Amen" and "I Told You So," has his voice back.

In July 2013, Travis was hospitalized with viral cardiomyopathy, a virus that attacks the heart, and later suffered a stroke. The Country Music Hall of Famer had to relearn how to walk, spell and read in the years that followed. A condition called aphasia limits his ability to speak — it's why his wife Mary Travis assists him in interviews. It's also why he hasn't released new music in over a decade, until now.

"Where That Came From," which released Friday, is a rich acoustic ballad amplified by Travis' immediately recognizable, soulful vocal tone.

Cris Lacy, Warner Music Nashville co-president, approached Randy and Mary Travis and asked: "What if we could take Randy's voice and recreate it using AI?" Mary Travis told The Associated Press over Zoom last week, Randy smiling in agreement right next to her. "Well, we were all over that, so we were so excited."

"All I ever wanted since the day of a stroke was to hear



Randy Travis, left, and Mary Davis appear at the 58th annual Academy of Country Music Awards on Thursday, May 11, 2023, in Frisco, Texas.

that voice again."

Lacy tapped developers in London to create a proprietary AI model to begin the process. The result was two models: One with 12 vocal stems (or song samples), and another with 42 stems collected across Travis' career — from 1985 to 2013, says Kyle Lehning, Travis' longtime producer. Lacy and Lehning chose to use "Where That Came From," a song written by Scotty Emerick and John Scott Sherrill that Lehning co-produced and held on to for years. He believed it could best artic-

ulate the humanity of Travis' idiosyncratic vocal style.

"I never even thought about another song," Lehning said. Once he input the demo vocal (sung by James Dupree) into the AI models, "it took about five minutes to analyze," says Lehning. "I really wish somebody had been here with a camera because I was the first person to hear it. And it was stunning, to me, how good it was sort of right off the bat. It's hard to put an equation around it, but it was probably 70, 75% what you hear now."

"There were certain aspects of it that were not authentic to Randy's performance," he said, so he began to edit and build on the recording with engineer Casey Wood, who also worked closely with Travis over a few decades.

The pair cherry-picked from the two models, and made alterations to things like vibrato speed, or slowing and relaxing phrases. "Randy is a laid-back singer," Lehning says. "Randy, in my opinion, had an old soul quality to his voice. That's one of the things that made him

unique, but also, somehow familiar."

His vocal performance on "Where That Came From" had to reflect that fact.

"We were able to just improve on it," Lehning says of the AI recording. "It was emotional, and it's still emotional."

Mary Travis says the "human element," and "the people that are involved" in this project, separate it from more nefarious uses of AI in music.

"Randy, I remember watching him when he first heard the song after it was completed. It was beautiful because at first, he was surprised, and then he was very pensive, and he was listening and studying," she said. "And then he put his head down and his eyes were a little watery. I think he went through every emotion there was, in those three minutes of just hearing his voice again."

Lacy agrees. "The beauty of this is, you know, we're doing it with a voice that the world knows and has heard and has been comforted by," she says.

"But I think, just on human terms, it's a very real need. And it's a big loss when you lose the voice of someone that you were connected to, and the ability to have it back is a beautiful gift." □

Associated Press



Kim Godwin attends the Disney 2022 Upfront presentation at Basketball City Pier 36, Tuesday, May 17, 2022, in New York.

Associated Press

By **DAVID BAUDER**  
AP Media Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Kim Godwin is out after three tumultuous years as ABC News presi-

dent, a move presaged earlier this year when network parent Walt Disney Co. installed one of its executives, Debra O'Connell, to oversee

## Kim Godwin out as ABC News president after 3 years as first Black woman as network news chief

the news division.

Godwin, the first Black woman to lead a network news division, said Sunday she was retiring from the business. O'Connell said she will be in charge "for the time being" as it looks ahead.

Godwin inherited a news division where its two most important programs, "World News Tonight" and "Good Morning America," led rivals at CBS and NBC in the ratings. They're still ahead, although "Good Morning America" has seen some

slippage amid the messy departures of anchors T.J. Holmes and Amy Robach, and Cecilia Vega's jump to CBS News.

Godwin was recruited as an outsider from CBS News and was beset by grumbling about her management style that made it into print. In a note to staff members, Godwin said she understood and appreciated the significance of being the first Black woman to hold such a prominent broadcast news role.

"It's both a privilege and a debt to those who chipped away at the ceiling before me to lead a team whose brand is synonymous with trust, integrity and a dogged determination to be the best in the business," she wrote. After working at ABC, CBS, NBC and at 10 local news stations in nine cities, Godwin said she's quitting the business.

"I leave with my head held high and wish the entire team continued success," she wrote. □

# Uncertain plans for 150th Kentucky Derby winner Mystik Dan, others leave questions for Preakness

By GARY B. GRAVES

AP Sports Writer

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — The second jewel of horse racing's Triple Crown could be missing 150th Kentucky Derby winner Mystik Dan and other co-stars, quashing hopes for a rematch after the thrilling three-wide photo finish in the milestone race.

Trainer Kenny McPeck and the horse's ownership wouldn't commit to whether the colt would race in the Preakness on May 18 in Baltimore, which requires a quick two-week turnaround. Mystik Dan will travel to Saratoga, New York, before they decide whether to enter him in the 1 3/16 mile Preakness.

"We're not committed to the Preakness, not yet," McPeck said Sunday morning outside his barn at Churchill Downs. "I ran him back once in two weeks and it completely backfired on me. ... So, we'll just watch him over the next week. It'll be one of those (situations) where we'll probably take it up to the last minute."

"We'll let him tell us."

Trainer Bob Baffert has told Pimlico officials that he is sending Muth and Imagination to Baltimore for the Preakness.



Brian Hernandez Jr. rides Mystik Dan, right, to the finish line to win the 150th running of the Kentucky Derby horse race at Churchill Downs Saturday, May 4, 2024, in Louisville, Ky.

Associated Press

Muth won the Arkansas Derby on March 30, when Mystik Dan finished third. Imagination was second behind Stronghold in the Santa Anita Derby on April 6.

Baffert has won the Preakness eight times, including last year with National Treasure.

Saratoga in upstate New York will host the Triple Crown's final race for the next three years while Belmont Park is being reconstructed. The Belmont has

also been shortened to 1 1/4 miles, matching the Derby distance that Mystik Dan won by a nose over Sierra Leone and Japan-bred Forever Young in the closest three-way finish since 1947.

The five-week gap follows a more normal race schedule for many horses and some trainers might opt to head to Saratoga to acclimate horses sooner.

Chad Brown said Sierra Leone will skip the Preakness and leave on Monday to

train at Saratoga and run in the Belmont.

"He's a real laidback horse but when we brought him out, was a little more tired than he normally is after his races," Brown said. "I think giving him the five weeks to the Belmont is definitely the right thing to do."

Trainer Brad Cox is watching Catching Freedom (fourth) and Just A Touch (20th) before deciding their next steps. Forever Young and fellow Japan-bred T O Password (fifth) are head-

ed home on Tuesday.

That could leave the Preakness without some Derby star power at first glance, though it won't lack for plotlines with a number of well-rested horses expected to compete at Pimlico.

As McPeck and the owners ponder a decision, he and jockey Brian Hernandez Jr. basked in a wash of congratulations for a Derby victory that put them in exclusive company.

Saturday's win helped both claim rare weekend sweeps of the Derby and Kentucky Oaks for fillies. McPeck is just the third trainer to do that and first since Ben Jones (who did it twice) in 1952, while Hernandez is the eighth rider to achieve the feat and first since fellow Louisiana native and Hall of Famer Calvin Borel in 2009.

Meanwhile, Mystik Dan just stood calm and unfazed as a cluster of onlookers took photos and selfies as workers bathed him outside the barn. He was then draped with the winner's blanket signifying his Derby win before being led back to his stall with a WWE-style title belt laying on an outer wall. Oaks-winning filly Thorpedo Anna also made a brief appearance and soaked in the attention. □

## Merlier wins Giro Stage 3 after Pogacar fires up finale and stays in the lead

FOSSANO, Italy (AP) — Belgian rider Tim Merlier won the third stage of the Giro d'Italia after race leader Tadej Pogacar almost caught the sprinters by surprise in a breathtaking finale on Monday.

Merlier claimed his second career stage win at the Italian grand tour ahead of Jonathan Milan and Biniam Girmay.

For Merlier's eighth win this season, he timed his last effort precisely, surging from the right side to pip Milan by less than half a wheel.

Pogacar, who grabbed the pink jersey on Sunday, was not expected to shine during Monday's trek between

Novara and Fossano. With its mainly flat profile and just a small hill near the finish, the 166-kilometer (103-mile) stage looked ideal for the first battle between the sprinters. The main overall contenders were expected to spend the day safely in the peloton but Pogacar had other ideas.

"It's still better to be in front than stay in the bunch," Pogacar said three stages into his Giro debut. "Then, in the final, it was stretching the legs."

After a breakaway group which formed after the first intermediate sprint was caught with some 43 kilometers left, Pogacar sprint-

ed for the bonus seconds awarded in the town of Cherasco.

Ben Swift, a teammate of Geraint Thomas, was the fastest, however, and took the bonus three seconds. Pogacar was second followed by Geraint Thomas and gained two seconds. Thomas was awarded a one-second bonus.

As the peloton rode toward the finish line in a drizzle, Mikkell Honore launched a bold move with three kilometers left, setting up a breathtaking finale.

Only Pogacar and Thomas could follow and the pair looked like they could pull it off after they dropped



Belgium's Tim Merlier of Soudal Quick-Step team celebrates as he won the third stage of the Giro d'Italia from Novara to Fossano, Italy, May 06, 2024.

Associated Press

Honore. But the long section of road that followed a hairpin bend was too much

to handle and the sprinters caught them with about 300 meters to go. □

# Kyle Larson and Denny Hamlin, the dominant NASCAR Cup Series drivers, could have a blooming rivalry

By DAVE SKRETTA  
AP Sports Writer

**KANSAS CITY, Kan. (AP)** — What is quickly becoming the best rivalry in NASCAR evidently has at least one willing participant. After Kyle Larson edged Chris Buescher at the line in the closest finish in history Sunday night at Kansas Speedway, the 2021 Cup Series champion confessed that he would have been OK finishing second, because their door-banging, nose-to-nose finish — the final margin was a mere hundredth of a second — was just so "frickin' awesome." If it was Denny Hamlin, rather than Buescher, who beat the No. 5 car in a photo finish? Well ... "I'd have been pissed off," Larson admitted, "because I've finished second to him so many times, and I would hate to probably hear, 'Oh, the Larson-Hamlin finish,' or, 'Hamlin beat him again.' That would suck." Six times Larson and Hamlin have finished 1-2 in a race, including the previ-



Denny Hamlin leads Kyle Larson into Turn 1 during a NASCAR Cup Series auto race at Dover Motor Speedway, Sunday, April 28, 2024, in Dover, Del.

ous week at Dover and last year at Kansas, when Hamlin bumped Larson into the wall on the final lap to win. In fact, all six times, Hamlin has been the victor. It almost came down to them again Sunday, too. They ran near the front all

race, and it was Hamlin who had the lead after Kyle Busch brought out a late caution and the field cycled through pit stops. But on the restart, Larson ducked low and caught Hamlin in the middle with Buescher on the outside,

and the No. 11 from Joe Gibbs Racing dropped backward like a rock.

"I needed to get a push from the 5," Hamlin said, "but I knew he wasn't going to stay in line. He was going to go for the win."

Hamlin wound up finishing fifth, saying afterward: "Had a great view of the finish." Through the first dozen races of the Cup Series season, Larson and Hamlin have emerged as the guys to beat.

Larson has led a series-best 633 laps and Hamlin is second at 606. Larson leads in stage wins with six while Hamlin is second with three. Hamlin is tied for the series lead with three trips to victory lane while Larson now has two.

Pick the statistic — top-fives, where Larson has a series-leading six and Hamlin has four — and the story keeps playing out.

"It's important for sure to put together good runs every weekend, and I think our team has done a phenomenal job of that," Larson said. "We've racked up a ton of stage points compared to the field, which has been huge. Stage wins, as well, which obviously helps. Then we've been finishing good, too. We've either been top-five every race or something has hap-

pened where we finished just around 20th. But those days last year I would have crashed or something, doing something stupid."

As for their developing rivalry, Larson and Hamlin have a lot to live up to in the pantheon of remarkable ones in NASCAR. In the 1970s, Cale Yarborough and Bobby Allison feuded so fiercely and so often that after a crash during the 1979 Daytona 500, the two jumped from their cars and began throwing haymakers. Richard Petty and David Pearson at least kept their rivalry on the track, though it was no less heated, and Tony Stewart and Kurt Busch often clashed throughout the 2000s. The last great rivalry, though, might have been Dale Earnhardt and Jeff Gordon, going fender-to-fender for wins seemingly every week. And that one ended in tragedy nearly 25 years ago, when Earnhardt was killed in a crash during the Daytona 500.

Both had passionate fans, just like Larson and Hamlin do. Both were part of powerful teams, just like Hamlin and Larson are.

In fact, Larson has helped Hendrick Motorsports pile up six wins through the first 12 races, with William Byron winning three times and Chase Elliott once. Hamlin's three wins and another by Christopher Bell give Joe Gibbs Racing four on the year.

All the rest of the Cup Series teams combined have just two.

"Really proud of what we're doing as a company, and what we're doing together, and the consistency I think that we have across our four cars," Hendrick Motorsports president Jeff Andrews said. "We know we have to work hard and we've got to keep this going. We're still kind of in the early part of the season, so to speak. But certainly proud of where we're at."

Lately, that's been with Larson somewhere close to the front of the field.

Usually, Hamlin is right there with him. □




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